

Honour Killing

Dignity and Prestige Lies in Women

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Honor killing is a very heinous crime of the society. An honor killing or honour killing (also called a customary killing) is the murder of a member of a family or social group by other members, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community. The method of honor killing is adopted when a girl or boys goes against the wishes of her family and marries a person who does not belong to her own community. each and every individual has the right to live his or her own life according to their own wishes. After attaining the age of 18 and 21 by the girl and the boy respectively, the family has no right to force them into marriage or any other act if they or unwilling to do so. In fact, parent only desire to see their children happy but a number of families, their status and position in the society is more important than their child. The people who support the honor killing should be called as criminals who are more dangerous than the terrorists. Terrorists kill people who are unknown to them. But these people who support honour killing and are a part of it are heartless because only a heartless individual can kill someone they love and that too for a baseless reason.

An honor killing or honour killing¹ is the homicide of a member of a family or social group by other members, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor or shame upon the family or community. Honour killings are directed mostly against women and girls, but have been extended to men now. Victims of honor killings are killed for reasons such as refusing to enter an arranged marriage, being in a relationship that is disapproved by their relatives, having sex outside marriage, becoming the victim of rape, dressing in ways which are deemed inappropriate, or engaging in homosexual relations.

An Honour killing also called a customary killing. Honour Killing is the murder

of a family or clan member by one or more fellow family members where the murderers believe the victim to have brought dishonor upon the family, clan or community. These killings result from the perception that defense of honour justifies killing a person whose behavior dishonors their clan or family².

Honour Killing literally means murder committed to safeguard the Honour of the family but the term has got a deeper meaning and serves a different motive in our villages. The standard definition of Honour Killing goes to like this- "Honour Killing is murder of womenfolk by family members, generally male, who are compelled to remove stain on their family's Honour". A

woman can cause that stain on the family due to several reasons like refusing an arranged marriage, eloping with her beloved, being the victim of sexual assault or just because she wants to get a divorce.

Human Right Watch defines "Honour Killing" as follows:

Honour killing are acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonour upon the family. A woman can be targeted by (individuals within) her family for a variety of reasons, including: refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce-even from an abusive husband-or (allegedly) committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that "dishonours" her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life³. Men can also be the victims of honor killings by members of the family of a woman with whom they are perceived to have an inappropriate relationship⁴. The loose term "honor killing" applies to killing of both men and women in cultures that practice it.⁵

HONOR KILLING IN HISTORY-

As noted by Christian Arab writer, Norma Khouri, honor killings originate from the belief that a woman's chastity is the property of her families, a cultural norm that comes "from our ancient tribal days, from the Hammurabi and Assyrian tribes of 1200 B.C.⁶."

Matthew A. Goldstein, J.D. (Arizona), has also noted that honor killings were encouraged in ancient Rome, where male family members who did not take actions against the female adulterers in their family were "actively persecuted"⁷

The origin of honor killings and the control of women is evidenced throughout

history in the culture and tradition of many regions. The Roman law of pater families gave complete control to the men of the family for both their children and wives. Under these laws, the lives of children and wives were at the sole discretion of the men in their family. Ancient Roman law also established historical roots of honor killings through the law stating that women found guilty of adultery could be killed by their husband in whatever manner the husband desired. In ancient Rome, being raped was seen as dishonorable to the point of destroying a woman's life and reputation, and honor killing was supposed to be a "merciful" act. In Greece also, the lives of women were dictated by their husbands as women were considered socially below males.⁸ Qays bin Asim, ancient leader of Banu Tamim is credited by some historians as the first to kill children on the basis of honor. It is recorded that he murdered all of his daughters to prevent them from ever causing him any kind of dishonor⁹.

Reasons of Honor Killing-

Changing cultural and economic status of women has been also used to explain the occurrences of honor killings. Women in largely patriarchal cultures who have gained economic independence from their families go against their male-dominated culture. Some researchers argue that the shift towards greater responsibility for women and less for their fathers may cause their male family members to act in oppressive and sometimes violent manners in order to regain authority.

This change of culture can also be seen to have an effect in Western cultures such as Britain where honor killings often arise from women seeking greater independence and adopting seemingly Western values. For women who trace their ancestry back to the Middle East or South Asia,

wearing clothes that are considered Western, having a boyfriend, or refusing to accept an arranged marriage are all offenses that can and have led to an honor killing¹⁰.

There is some evidence that homosexuality can also be perceived as grounds for honor killing by relatives. In one case, a gay Jordanian man was shot and wounded by his brother. In another case, a homosexual Turkish student, Ahmet Yildiz, was shot outside a cafe and later died in the hospital. Sociologists have called this Turkey's first publicized gay honor killing¹¹.

In many cultures, victims of rape face severe violence, including honor killings, from their families and relatives. In many parts of the world, women who have been raped are considered to have brought 'dishonor' or 'disgrace' to their families. This is especially the case if the victim becomes pregnant.¹²

Generally, marriage is done between the two people of opposite sex of same caste of same religion as per the choice of their family and society but since many years this concept has been changed and a newly kind of marriage is coming into existence, e. i., inter-caste marriage. Sex before marriage, pre-marital relationship, extra-marital relationship, marriage with own choice etc. These are the examples of those behavior which unacceptable by the society, if done by the girls and women. Inter-Caste Marriage is a marriage in which bride and bridegroom both are of different caste, may be of different religion.

This kind of marriage is rapidly growing these days. People are not ready to accept it with open hands. For it there may be many reasons. Some people are of opinion that it would be a social stigma on the family, if they allow their children to marry in different caste or different religion. The Indian so-

ciety is not ready to accept these kinds of behaviors at any rate. Whenever such kinds of behaviors come into light, society protests it by all means. The couples indulged in such behaviors always have to suffer and they have to leave their home because in their family there is none going to accept them and many times couples are killed brutally.

Honor killing in Abroad-

According to UN 2002

"The report of the Special Reporter concerning cultural practices in the family that are violent towards women (E/CN.4/2002/83), indicated that honour killings had been reported in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Yemen, and other Mediterranean and Persian Gulf countries, and that they had also taken place in western countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom, within migrant communities."

In April 2008 it came to light that some months prior, a Saudi woman was killed by her father for chatting on Face book to a man. The murder only came to light when a Saudi cleric referred to the case in an attempt to demonstrate the strife that the website causes. In March 2009, Turkish immigrant Gulsum was killed for a relationship outside her family's plan for an arranged marriage. Pakistan honor killings are known locally as karo-kari. Amnesty International's report noted "the failure of the authorities to prevent these killings by investigating and punishing the perpetrators." The average annual number of honour killings for the whole nation ran up to more than 10,000 per year¹³. According to woman rights advocates, the concept of women as property and honour is so deeply entrenched in the social, political and economic fabric of Pakistan that the government, for the most part, ignores the daily occurrences of

women being killed and maimed by their families." Frequently, women murdered in "honour" killings are recorded as having committed suicide or died in accidents¹⁴.

Position in India-

The Hindu historic practice of sati, or widow-burning, in parts of India and South Asia can be considered a form of honour suicide in those instances when (at least theoretically) the act is voluntary, with a deceased man's widow immolating herself on his funeral pyre as an act of pious devotion and to preserve her and her family's honour. Evidence suggests that in some instances, sati was not "voluntary", but was compelled, both historically and in modern times. Ever since the British ruled India, sati has been banned and is now considered murder.

Honor killings have been reported in northern regions of India, mainly in the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, as a result of people marrying without their family's acceptance, and sometimes for marrying outside their caste or religion. In contrast, honor killings are rare to non-existent in South India and the western Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. In some other parts of India, notably West Bengal, honor killings ceased about a century ago, largely due to the activism and influence of reformists such as Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Vidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Among Rajputs, marriages with members of other castes can provoke the killing of the married couple and immediate family members. This form of honor killing is attributed to Rajput culture and traditional views on the perceived "purity" of a lineage. The Indian state of Punjab has a large number of honor killings. According to data compiled by the Punjab Police, 34 honor killings were reported in the state between 2008 and 2010: 10 in 2008, 20 in 2009, and four in

2010¹⁵.

Haryana is also notorious for incidents of honor killing, mainly in the upper caste of society, among rajputs and jaats. Bhagalpur in the eastern Indian state of Bihar has also been notorious for honor killings.¹⁶ Recent cases include a 16-year-old girl, Imrana, from Bhojpur who was set on fire inside her house in a case of what the police called 'moral vigilantism'. The victim had screamed for help for about 20 minutes before neighbors arrived, only to find her smouldering body. She was admitted to a local hospital, where she later died from her injuries¹⁷. In May 2008, Jayvirsingh Bhadodiya shot his daughter Vandana Bhadodiya and struck her on the head with an axe¹⁸.

In a landmark judgment in March 2010, Karnal district court ordered the execution of five perpetrators of an honor killing in Kaithal, and imprisoning for life the khap (local caste-based council) chief who ordered the killings of Manoj Banwala (23) and Babli (19), a man and woman of the same clan who eloped and married in June 2007. Despite having been given police protection on court orders, they were kidnapped; their mutilated bodies were found a week later in an irrigation canal¹⁹. In June 2010, scrutinizing the increasing number of honor killings, the Supreme Court of India issued notices to the Central Government and six states including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to take preventive measures against honor killings.

Alarmed by the rise of honor killings, the Government planned to bring a bill in the Monsoon Session of Parliament July 2010 to provide for deterrent punishment for 'honor' killings.²⁰

In June 2012, a man chopped off his 20-year-old daughter's head with a sword

in Rajasthan after learning that she was dating men. According to police officer, "Omkar Singh told the police that his daughter Manju had relations with several men. He had asked her to mend her ways several times in the past. However, she did not pay heed. Out of pure rage, he chopped off her head with the sword."²¹

Honour Killings and the Domestic Violence:

Fundamentalists of many religions may expect their women to meet some but not all of these expectations. Families that kill for Honorium Causa will threaten girls and women if they refuse to cover their hair, their faces, or their bodies or act as their family's domestic servant; wear makeup or Western clothing; choose friends from another religion; date; seek to obtain an advanced education; refuse an arranged marriage; seek a divorce from a violent husband; marry against their parents' wishes; or behave in ways that are considered too independent, which might mean anything from driving a car to spending time or living away from home or family. Although the starting point of honour killing is refusing of anything by a girl or woman and it always start from the home so also referred as domestic violence against the woman but honor killing is differ from domestic violence. The reason given for the honor killing is that the girl or young woman has "dishonored" the family but in case of domestic violence does not claim any family concept of "honor." Honor killing is committed mainly by fathers against their teenage daughters and daughters in their early twenties. Wives and older-age daughters may also be victims, but to a lesser extent but domestic violence is committed by an adult male spouse against an adult female spouse or intimate partner.

Women and Honour Killing

Indian society is still largely male-dominated, and most women do not have real freedom. A cultural struggle is needed to sweep away the feudal and medieval mentality from which such a situation stems. The Indian Constitution, in Articles 14, 15 and 16, provides for equality between men and women. But in practice there is often denial of equality for women in large parts of India, particularly in the rural areas, due to the disgusting survival of remnants of feudalism and medievalism. Feudal, agricultural societies were based predominantly on physical labour. Being usually physically stronger than women, men were dominant in feudal societies, and women largely confined to household work. Small-scale and middle peasant farming shackled women, tied them to individual households, and restricted their outlook. They were practically slaves of their husbands, who often beat them cruelly. Upon marriage their property often passed to their husband. In India, with its patriarchal society, women are considered as property and the vessel of family's honor. And any act which might blot the family's prestige renders an absolute right to the male members to murder the girl, undo her wrongs and win back the honor.

'Honor killings are not new to the rural India especially in the regions of Harayana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. But then such cases are not just restricted to the rural areas. They are also heard of in our capital and in the southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu etc. The Aarushi Talwar Case and the killing of Kuldeep and Monica are speculated to be such killings.

Our country has been very selective about the kind of development she has undergone. On an international level with

the nuclear deal, 8% growth rate and the recognition India is enjoying to voice its opinion, it seems that 'India is shining'. But dig deeper into the dark secrets of this developing nation and we still find rampant killings of young couples by their own family members to save their honor because of the incest committed by the couple. Their crime: living in the same village and getting married.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

Conference at Sweden in 2004 concluded that, "Violence in the name of honour must be combated as an obstacle to women's enjoyment of human rights. Interpretations of honour as strongly connected with female chastity must be challenged. It can never be accepted that customs, traditions, or religious considerations are invoked to avoid obligations to eradicate violence against women and girls, including violence in the name of honor. Violence against women must be addressed from a rights-based perspective. Measures should be taken in the areas of legislation, employment, education, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Respect for women's enjoyment of human rights is intrinsically linked to democracy. International conventions must be incorporated into national legislation."²²

The solution to this problem mainly lies in the eradication of myths in the minds of people. They need to be educated with the provisions given in the Hindu Marriage Act and what kinds of marriages are actually considered invalid. Since the concept of Gotras and Sapindas are different from each other, it should be explained to them.

A special section as 300-A should be added in Indian Penal Code, 1860 as definition and punishment of honour killing.

It is suggested that Indian Evidence Act, 1872 should be amended and burden of proof should be put on the accused, thereby making them responsible to prove their innocence in the event of death taking place due to their actions.

It is also suggested to amend the Special Marriages Act, 1954. This amendment would do away with provision for 30 days mandatory notice period for marriage intended to be solemnized under this Act. It is imperative to raising literacy levels and makes empower women in northern India in that way women can protect themselves.

People should leave their heathenness towards inter-caste marriage and all the people of all the classes should welcome this kind of marriages with open hands so that harmonious condition may prevail in Indian society and innocent couple may

not be murdered.

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